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ABSTRACT

To identify causes for low enrollment in secondary agricultural schools in Yemen, the United States Agency for International Development and the Yemen Ministry of Education surveyed 990 preparatory (junior high) students, examining their educational aspirations, differences between rural and urban youth, major influences on student aspirations, and the effect of information regarding agricultural schools on student decisions to attend. In spite of the fact that only 12% of preparatory students in Yemen matriculate in the secondary schools, all but seven students surveyed indicated that they expected to attend secondary school. Three-fourths of the students wanted to attend general education schools, and the next largest group wanted to attend agricultural schools. Most of those wishing to attend agricultural schools were from rural areas. Students identified their parents as having the greatest influence on decisions about education. Over 90% said they planned to go on to higher education, and most wanted careers in medicine, engineering, or the military. In contrast to student career preferences, Yemen has a great need for technical trained people and for teachers at all levels. The Ministries of Information and Education may seriously consider developing programs to communicate the countries needs to the parents and youth of Yemen. (JHZ)

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Study of Educational Aspirations of Preparatory School Students in Yemen

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RC 016 372

Study of Educational Aspirations of Preparatory School Students in Yemen

In 1979 the United States Agency for International Development at the request of the government of the Yemen Arab Republic started the development of an agricultural secondary school within that country. New Mexico State University was chosen to be the lead institution on the project. In 1984 after five years of operation, both countries had spent vast amounts of resources on the school. As a result there were excellent facilities, a complete curriculum and well trained teachers and administration. The school is located in the Ibb province which is the most fertile part of the country. In spite of the fact that the school had excellent facilities and resources and in a country where young people are very eager for an education, the school was only half full. Earlier the government felt that an incentive was needed for young people to go into agriculture and developed a policy that 300 rials per month and free room and board would be provided for each student. USAID and the Ministry of Education decided that more information was needed to determine the reasons for the lack of interest in attending secondary agricultural schools in Yemen.

In the spring of 1984 a survey was conducted in the nearby provinces to determine the educational aspirations of youth and what were the deterrents to their attending secondary agricultural schools. The objectives of this study were:

1. to determine the educational aspirations of youth in the Yemen Arab Republic.

2. to determine if there was a difference in the educational aspirations of rural and urban youth in the country.

3. to determine who had a major influence on their aspirations.

4. to determine if additional information regarding agricultural schools could influence their decision to attend secondary agricultural schools.

The Director Generals of Education from Ibb and Taiz provinces were asked to give the names of ten schools, two city schools and eight rural schools in each province. These schools were then randomly selected so that in each province there were two groups of four village and one city school. One group was given a presentation on opportunities in agriculture in Yemen and how the agricultural schools could train young people for these opportunities. In the neighboring province of Radah, one additional city and two village schools were also selected. The city school and one randomly selected village school were given the presentation and the other village school was not. The presentations were given by a team of an administrator, teacher and two students from the Ibb secondary agricultural institute. The presentation lasted approximately one hour and consisted of a lecture and discussion about the school. The

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classes selected were the third year preparatory students who would be entering the secondary schools the next year. For those classes given the presentation, the questionnaire was administered immediatly after the presentation. For those without the presentation, only the questionnaire was administered to the class. In a few instances, girls were in the classes with the boys but the school administrators would not allow information to be collected from them. The data is only from male students. This was not to serious for planning purposes due to the fact that only boys are allowed to enter the secondary agricultural schools.

Presentation of Findings

TABLE 1
NUMBER PLANNING FOR ADDITIONAL SECONDARY EDUCATION

	Yes	No	Total
City	252	1	253
Village	731	6	737
Total	983	7	990

The question asked was, "Do you plan to continue your secondary education?" Overwhelmingly, 983 said yes and seven said no. This is probably a very unrealistic aspiration for most of these students. Data from the Ministry of Education showed that approximately 25% of the preparatory students will continue their education to secondary schools. There is a positive desire to continue their education even though few follow through.

TABLE 2
CHOICE OF TYPES OF SECONDARY SCHOOLS

	1ST	2ND	3RD
Vocational Agricultural Schools	104	136	251
Vocational Industrial Schools	4	56	43
Vocational Commercial Schools	51	314	225
Veterinary Schools	15	51	81
Teachers Institutes	19	104	71
Religious Institutes	15	144	96
General Education	774	52	113

When the students were asked to indicate their first, second and third choices of schools they would like to attend, by far the largest first choice was General Education with Vocational Agriculture second. On the second and third choices the interest in Vocational Commercial Schools was quite high with agriculture holding its own. It was surprising with the extreme shortage of teachers in the country that this choice was not higher. Table 3 shows a further breakdown of those choosing General Education by place of residence and choice of either science or arts. The overwhelming choice of both city and village students was for the science curriculum. This indicates a society wanting to move rapidly ahead by means of technology and science.

TABLE 3
CHOICE OF THOSE INDICATING GENERAL EDUCATION PREFERENCE

	Science	Arts	Total
City	136	6	142
Village	523	85	608
Total	659	91	750

As was mentioned earlier, a presentation on the opportunities in the agricultural schools was given to half of the schools while to the other half this information was not given. There was little difference between the two groups of schools as far as the total indicating agriculture as first, second or third choice. The presentation however did seem to increase the intensity of choice with a slightly larger number of students indicating agriculture as their first choice from those schools with the presentation. While the presentation did not increase the number of students interested in agricultural schools, it did increase their level of interest.

TABLE 4
EFFECT OF PRESENTATION OF THOSE CHOOSING AGRICULTURAL SCHOOLS

	With Presentation	Without Presentation
1st choice	63	41
2nd choice	95	91
3rd choice	104	147
Total	262	279

TABLE 5
PERSON RESPONSIBLE FOR SCHOOL CHOICE

	Self	Other
City	215	30
Village	602	113
Total	817	143

Most of the students from both the villages and the city indicated they were responsible for their own choices. Table 5 is an example of the independency of the Yemen people even at a young age. Table 6 shows that those who were influenced by someone else, 128 were influenced by parents, 46 by brothers and sisters, 7 by teachers, 25 by friends, and 6 by others. The major influence by others came from within the family with the teachers having almost no influence on future educational choices. This may mean that if there is an attempt to direct youth toward educational or career choices that the programs should be directed toward young people and their parents.

TABLE 6
NUMBER OF STUDENTS PLANNING TO ATTEND COLLEGE

	YES	NO	TOTAL
City	229	16	245
Village	667	53	720
Total	896	69	965

Large numbers of students in Yemen indicated that their plans are to continue their education beyond high school and to college. Table 6 is an extremely unrealistic aspiration. It may be necessary to develop some type of guidance program for the students to help them become acquainted with the types of opportunities which are available within the country. This finding is not uncommon in many underdeveloped countries where everyone has aspirations for a university education.

TABLE 7
KINDS OF UNIVERSITY EDUCATION PREFERRED

	City	Village	Total
Engineering	68	176	244
Medicine	77	223	300
Military Education	36	106	142
Agriculture	6	36	42
Science	9	23	32
Law	4	28	32
Commerce	3	21	24
Arts	2	9	11
Economics	5	12	17
Pharmacy	1	-	1
Music	-	1	1
Education	1	15	16
Total	212	650	862

The data in Table 7 indicates that the majority of the students aspired to professions of Engineering, Medicine and Military. These are probably presented in the media as the most desirable. It is interesting to note that a large majority planned to take science programs at the secondary level, and that most saw these as vehicles to applied science fields such as engineering and medicine rather than science itself at the university level. The areas of agriculture, science, law, commerce, economics and education are on the lower end of the choices and yet there may be many more opportunities in these fields than medicine, engineering and military.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

In the Spring of 1985 nearly 1000 preparatory students (junior high) students in Yemen were surveyed to determine their educational aspirations. The major findings are as follows:

1. A large majority of the students surveyed indicated an expectation to attend secondary school. This was from both the rural and city youth. This is a very unrealistic aspiration as only about 12% of the preparatory students in Yemen ever matriculate in the secondary schools.

2. Three-fourths of the students indicated they wished to attend general education schools, with the next largest group wanting to attend agricultural schools. On the second and third choices, the vocational commercial schools were chosen by large numbers of students. By far the largest number of those wishing to attend agricultural schools was from the rural areas.

3. When asked which significant others helped them in making their decision the largest number said that parents were influential. This is similar to young people from studies conducted in the United States when asked a similar question.

4. When asked about possible college attendance, over 90% indicated that they planned to go on to higher education. Most of them had aspirations in the areas of medicine, engineering and the military.

These findings are similar to aspiration studies in other underdeveloped countries in the world. The youth have high levels of educational aspirations for the prestige professions. These aspirations are vastly different from the opportunities and needs of the countries. There is a great need for technical trained people in all fields. In Yemen there is also a critical shortage of teachers at all levels. The Ministries of Information and Education may seriously consider developing programs which would communicate the countries' needs to the parents and youth of Yemen.